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USIA-06 DHA-02 IO-13 OMB-01 TRSE-00 /071 W

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EO 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR, TH, US

SUBJ: FRASER SUB-COMMITTEE HEARINGS ON HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION IN THAILAND

SUMMARY: IN CONNECTION WITH FORTHCOMING FRASER SUB-COMMITTEE HEARINGS ON HUMAN RIGHTS IN THAILAND, ATTENTION OF SUB-COMMITTEE MAY BE DIRECTED TO PAPER, "THAILAND: DOMINO BY DEFAULT?" WRITTEN BY WILLIAM BRADLEY, DAVID MORELL, DAVID SZANTON, AND STEPHEN YOUNG, COPY OF WHICH WAS SENT TO EMBASSY BY EA/TB SOME TIME AGO. FOLLOWING IS AN EXTENDED EMBASSY COMMENTARY ON PAPER. END SUMMARY.

1. ARTICLE ENTITLED "THAILAND: DOMINO BY DEFAULT?" IS AN EARNEST EFFORT TO GRAPPLE WITH THE ISSUE OF PROVIDING WHAT IT CALLS A "CONSTRUCTIVE FRAMEWORK FOR FORMULATION OF AMERICAN POLICY TOWARDS THAILAND IN THE COMING YEARS." IN EMBASSY VIEW IT IS A DISAPPOINTING EFFORT, AS IT DOES NOT SERIOUSLY EXAMINE THE SITUATION IN WHICH THAILAND FINDS ITSELF AND, MOST SERIOUS OF ALL, IT DOES NOT EXAMINE THE SITUATION IN THE UNITED STATES WHICH MUST INEVITABLY AFFECT WHATEVER POLICIES THE UNITED STATES SEEKS TO PURSUE TOWARDS THAILAND. TO MAKE THIS COMMENTARY FIT IN WITH PRESENT REALITIES IN SOUTHEAST ASIA, THERE FOLLOWS A STATEMENT OF THE CONTEXT IN WHICH THAILAND FINDS ITSELF AT PRESENT, AN ASSESSMENT OF AMERICAN ATTITUDES THAT BEAR ON THE SUBJECT AND AN EXTENDED

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DISCUSSION OF THE CONTENTS OF THE PAPER ITSELF.

2. CONTEXT - THE KINGDOM OF THAILAND FACES VERY DIFFICULT AND COMPLEX PROBLEMS OF ADAPTION TO THE NEW SOUTHEAST ASIAN ENVIRONMENT FOLLOWING THE FALL OF SAIGON AND PHNOM PENH IN APRIL, 1975. THESE PROBLEMS OF ADAPTION ARE ENTIRELY NEW TO THAILAND, UNLIKE ANY THE KINGDOM HAS FACED IN THE PAST. IT IS SERIOUSLY MISLEADING

TO SUGGEST, AS SOME THAI FOREIGN OBSERVERS DO, THAT THE PROBLEM IS SIMILAR TO THAILAND'S PROBLEM OF PLAYING OFF COMPETING BRITISH AND FRENCH IMPERIALISMS IN THE LATE 19TH CENTURY. THE BRITISH AND FRENCH GOVERNMENTS NEVER SERIOUSLY UNDERTOOK THE DISMEMBERMENT OF THAILAND AND, MOREOVER, NEVER DEVOTED MUCH TIME TO THE PROBLEM OF THAILAND, AS OTHER AND MORE PRESSING ISSUES CLOSER TO HOME OCCUPIED MOST OF THEIR ATTENTION. THAILAND IS LOCATED CLOSE TO THE CAPITALS OF THE COMMUNIST STATES OF INDO-CHINA AND, TO JUDGE FROM COMMUNIST RADIO OUTPUT, IS AN OBSESSION FOR THE LEADERS OF VIET-NAM, LAOS, AND, TO A LESSER EXTENT, CAMBODIA.

3. TWO YEARS HAVE PASSED SINCE THE FALL OF SAIGON AND PHNOM PENH. THE DOMINOES HAVE NOT FALLEN, AND THE THAI POLICY IS SUBSTANTIALLY UNCHANGED, THOUGH CLEARLY AND VERY DEEPLY CONCERNED ABOUT THE FUTURE. THE U.S. MILITARY PRESENCE IN THAILAND--A FEATURE OF THE SITUATION FROM 1962 TO 1976--IS GONE, THOUGH THE INDOCHINESE COMMUNIST STATES ARE PUBLICLY MOST RELUCTANT TO ACCEPT THE WITHDRAWAL OF THIS PRESENCE AS A FACT.

4. THE ROYAL THAI GOVERNMENT IN POWER AS OF JUNE 1, 1977, IS SIMILAR IN STRUCTURE AND OUTLOOK TO MOST THAI GOVERNMENTS SINCE THE OVERTHROW OF THE ABSOLUTE MONARCHY IN 1932. IT IS, HOWEVER, UNUSUAL, IN THAT IT HAS MADE NO SPECIAL EFFORT TO SEEK THE SUPPORT AND COLLABORATION OF MUCH OF THE THAI ACADEMIC AND INTELLECTUAL ELITE WHICH COLLABORATED LOYALLY WITH MILITARY-DOMINATED THAI GOVERNMENTS OF THE PAST. THE LEVEL OF BACKGROUND "NOISE" CRITICAL OF THE PRESENT THAI GOVERNMENT IS CORRESPONDINGLY HIGH.

5. LEADERS OF THE THAI GOVERNMENT--AND, TO A SOMEWHAT LESSER EXTENT, LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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TENT, THAI OPINION LEADERS--TEND TO SEE THEIR SOCIETY AS EMBATTLED AND THREATENED BY AN INTERNAL, COMMUNIST-CONTROLLED INSURGENCY AND BY A POTENTIAL, EXTERNAL THREAT FROM A VICTORIOUS AND MILITARILY POWERFUL VIET-NAM.

6. DESPITE THE STRONG MILITARY BACKING FOR THE PRESENT THAI GOVERNMENT AND THE OUTSPOKENLY ANTI-COMMUNIST POLICIES TO NORMALIZE THAILAND'S RELATIONSHIP WITH THE COMMUNIST STATES OF INDO-CHINA. IN THIS RESPECT THE PRESENT GOVERNMENT IS FOLLOWING THE SAME POLICIES AS ITS DEMOCRATICALLY-ELECTED PREDECESSORS. MOREOVER, WHILE THE PRESENT THAI LEADERS WANT CLOSE AND FRIENDLY RELATIONS WITH THE UNITED STATES, THEY FULLY APPRECIATE THAT THERE IS NO PROSPECT THAT U.S. FORCES WILL BE STATIONED IN THAILAND. THEY UNDERSTAND THAT IT WOULD NOT BE IN THAILAND'S INTERESTS TO HAVE U.S. FORCES IN THAILAND IN THESE CIRCUMSTANCES, AS THEIR PRESENCE WOULD COMPLICATE THE TASK OF NORMALIZATION OF RELATIONS WITH THE COMMUNIST INDOCHINESE STATES.

7. IN THE UNITED STATES, THE SUBJECT OF SOUTHEAST ASIA IS NOTICE-

ABLY LESS PAINFUL THAN IT WAS TWO YEARS AGO, BUT THE EVOLUTION OF A SOUTHEAST ASIAN POLICY THAT COMMANDS SUBSTANTIAL SUPPORT FROM THE AMERICAN PUBLIC AND FROM CONGRESS IS STILL CONTINUING. SENIOR OFFICIALS OF THE CARTER ADMINISTRATION HAVE STATED THAT THE MANILA TREATY OF 1954 (WHICH LED TO THE FORMATION OF SEATO) REMAINS A TREATY OBLIGATION OF THE UNITED STATES. AS THAILAND IS A PARTY TO THE TREATY, ALONG WITH THE UNITED STATES, THIS COULD AFFECT U.S. ATTITUDES TOWARDS THAILAND. HOWEVER, THE MANILA TREATY COMMITS THE UNITED STATES TO CONSULT WITH ITS ALLIES, INCLUDING THAILAND, IN THE EVENT OF A THREAT TO ONE OF THE PARTIES TO THE MANILA TREATY, AND TO "ACT TO MEET THE COMMON DANGER IN ACCORDANCE WITH ITS CONSTITUTIONAL PROCESSES." THIS COULD MEAN MUCH OR LITTLE, AND ACTION TAKEN WOULD UNDOUBTEDLY DEPEND ON THE CIRCUMSTANCES SURROUNDING THE POSING OF SUCH A DANGER TO THAILAND.

8. THE LANGUAGE OF THE MANILA TREATY IS OF MUCH LESS SIGNIFICANCE THAN THE MOOD AND OUTLOOK OF THE AMERICAN PUBLIC AND THE CONGRESS.
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IT IS SAFE TO SAY THAT, UNDER PRESENT CIRCUMSTANCES, A MAJORITY OF THE AMERICAN PUBLIC AND THE CONGRESS, WITH THE EXAMPLE OF THE VIET-NAM WAR SO FRESHLY BEFORE US, IS LIKELY TO FAVOR A COURSE OF LIMITED INVOLVEMENT IN SOUTHEAST ASIA. MOREOVER, AS LONG AS THE CHASE-CHURCH AMENDMENT (PASSED BY CONGRESS IN 1973, PROHIBITING THE USE OF U.S. MILITARY FORCES IN VIET-NAM, LAOS, AND CAMBODIA) REMAINS IN EFFECT, THERE IS A SPECIFIC, LEGISLATIVE LIMITATION ON EXECUTIVE ACTION. THE AMERICAN PEOPLE TEND TO BE MERCURIAL IN THEIR MOODS, AND ALL THAT CAN SAFELY BE SAID AT THIS POINT IS THAT THE MOOD OF TODAY HAS CHANGED FROM FIVE YEARS AGO, JUST AS THE MOOD FIVE YEARS IN THE FUTURE WILL SURELY BE DIFFERENT FROM THAT OF TODAY. NO ANALYSIS BEARING ON AMERICAN POLICY TOWARDS THAILAND OR ANY OTHER AREA OF THE WORLD CAN REALISTICALLY IGNORE THE DETERMINING ROLE WHICH AMERICAN PUBLIC OPINION AND ATTITUDES IN THE CONGRESS PLAY IN THE FORMULATION OF U.S. POLICY.

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9. DISCUSSION - THE ARTICLE ON THAILAND DISCUSSED IN THIS COMMENTARY IS CONSIDERABLY LESS THAN SATISFACTORY AS A BASIS FOR POLICY FORMULATION FOR THE FOLLOWING PRINCIPAL REASONS:

1) IT ADDRESSES THE SITUATION IN THAILAND BUT NOT IN THE UNITED STATES. A VIABLE U.S. POLICY TOWARDS THAILAND MUST CONSIDER THE CONGRUITY OF SUCH A POLICY WITH U.S. POLICIES ELSEWHERE IN SOUTH-EAST ASIA AND IN THE WORLD. ALSO, AS NOTED ABOVE, IT MUST REFLECT A REALISTIC APPRECIATION OF WHAT THE AMERICAN PEOPLE AND CONGRESS WILL SUPPORT. AN OBJECTIVE ASSESSMENT OF U.S. INTERESTS IN THAILAND MUST BE THE BEDROCK FOR DEVELOPMENT OF A VIABLE POLICY. U.S. INTERESTS IN THAILAND ARE NOT CONSIDERED IN THIS PAPER EXCEPT IN THE MOST CURSORY TERMS. THE FIRST PARAGRAPH ON PAGE TWO OF THE PAPER STATES, "WE HAVE BASED OUR EFFORTS ON A PRESUMPTION THAT WHAT HAPPENS IN THAILAND DOES MAKE A DIFFERENCE TO THE UNITED STATES, IF ONLY BECAUSE THAILAND HAS LONG BEEN A FRIEND AND ALLY OF OUR COUNTRY IN THAT IMPORTANT BUT UNSTABLE PART OF THE WORLD...." THIS IS HARDLY AN ASSESSMENT OF U.S. INTERESTS IN THAILAND AND WOULD BE LIKELY TO BE CONTESTED BY MANY AMERICANS.

2) THE PAPER IS FREQUENTLY INACCURATE AND IMPRECISE IN ITS TERMS, IN BOTH LARGE AND SMALL MATTERS. SPECIFICALLY:

10. MINOR BUT IRRITATING DETAILS - THE BEGINNING OF A TREATY
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RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THAILAND AND THE UNITED STATES IS SOURCED TO 1856 (PARA 2, PAGE 2). WHY 1856? THE FIRST U.S. TREATY WITH THAILAND, DESIGNED TO PROMOTE TRADE, WAS SIGNED BY THE TWO COUNTRIES IN 1833.

11. PARA 3, PAGE 2, REFERS TO THE THAI REPRESENTATIVE IN WASHINGTON DURING WORLD WAR II, M.R. SENI PRAMOT, AS A THAI AMBASSADOR. IN FACT, HE WAS THAI MINISTER. THIS IS EQUIVALENT TO CALLING A COLONEL A MAJOR GENERAL. IT HARDLY CREATES CONFIDENCE IN THE ACCURACY OF STATEMENTS IN THE ARTICLE AS A WHOLE.

12. PARA 4, PAGE 7, REFERS TO THE KHUKRIT GOVERNMENT AS A COALITION OF "THREE MAJOR PARTIES ON THE RIGHT." IN FACT, THE KHUKRIT GOVERNMENT WAS A COALITION OF 16 SMALL PARTIES --THE LARGEST NUMBER OF PARTIES TO HAVE ENTERED A COALITION GOVERNMENT IN ANY PARILA-

MENTARY DEMOCRATIC COUNTRY IN THE WORLD. IT WAS NOT SO MUCH DIFFICULTIES AMONG THE THREE LARGEST COALITION PARTNERS WHICH MADE KHUKRIT'S TASK SO TROUBLESOME AS IT WAS THE PROBLEM OF HARMONIZING THE INTERESTS OF 16 POLITICAL PARTIES.

13. PARA 2, PAGE 18, STATES THAT, "IN THE FIRST HALF OF 1976 THE GOVERNMENT'S FOREIGN POLICY WAS SHIFTING TOWARD MORE OPEN DIALOGUE WITH VIET-NAM, CAMBODIA, AND LAOS." THIS IS A BADLY-BLURRED JUDGMENT. IN THE FIRST PLACE, THE KHUKRIT GOVERNMENT RESIGNED ON JANUARY 12, 1976, AND AN ELECTIONS CAMPAIGN DOMINATED EVENTS UNTIL POLLING DAY ON APRIL 4. THE SENI GOVERNMENT DID NOT TAKE POWER UNTIL APRIL 21, 1976. IN THE SECOND PLACE, BOTH MEETINGS BETWEEN THAI CABINET MINISTERS AND CAMBODIAN DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER IENG SARY TOOK PLACE IN LATE 1975. THE VISIT OF FOREIGN MINISTER PHICHAI RATTAKUN TO LAOS AND VIET-NAM DID NOT TAKE PLACE UNTIL AUGUST, 1976.

14. PARA 3, PAGE 29, REFERS TO THE THANIN GOVERNMENT AS "THE NEW UPPER MIDDLE-CLASS GOVERNMENT." ACTUALLY, ALL THAI GOVERNMENTS SINCE THE OVERTHROW OF THE ABSOLUTE MONARCHY IN 1932 HAVE BEEN "UPPER MIDDLE-CLASS GOVERNMENTS", AS THE UPPER MIDDLE-CLASS LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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DOMINATES THE THAI POLITICAL SYSTEM. THE THANIN GOVERNMENT CONTAINS RELATIVELY FEWER REPRESENTATIVES OF THE THAI FINANCIAL AND ACADEMIC ELITE THAN ITS PREDECESSORS AND IS PROBABLY LESS "UPPER MIDDLE-CLASS" THAN THEY WERE.

15. BUT WHY CONTINUE WITH NIT-PICKING? THERE ARE PLENTY OF OTHER EXAMPLES OF INACCURATE DATES, MISTAKEN JUDGMENTS ON POINTS AND INTERPRETATIONS OF FACTS, AND OTHER EVIDENCE OF HASTY AND INADEQUATE RESEARCH. THE ONLY CONCLUSION IS THAT, FROM A GROUP OF FOUR ACADEMICIANS, WITH CONSIDERABLE EXPERIENCE IN THAI AFFAIRS, WE HAVE THE RIGHT TO EXPECT A BETTER QUALITY JOB. IT IS IRRITATING AND DISAPPOINTING TO OBSERVE THEIR CASUAL ATTITUDE TOWARDS THE FACTS.

16. SUBSTANTIAL ISSUES - PARA ONE, PAGE ONE STATES THAT UNDER THE "MILITARY RULE" ESTABLISHED IN OCTOBER 1976, "....THAI LEADERS HAVE DECISIVELY REJECTED REPRESENTATIVE POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS AND DETENTE WITH THEIR NEW SOCIALIST NEIGHBORS." THE THAI MILITARY LEADERS QUICKLY HANDED OVER GOVERNMENTAL POWER TO A LARGELY CIVILIAN CABINET UNDER PRIME MINISTER THANIN JUST OVER TWO WEEKS AFTER THE COUP. IT IS CERTAINLY TRUE THAT THE NEW CONSTITUTION HAS REJECTED REPRESENTATIVE POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS IN THE USUAL SENSE OF THE TERM, BUT EVEN PRIME MINISTER THANIN HAS REFERRED TO DEMOCRATIC ELECTIONS IN THE FUTURE. HOW DECISIVE IS "DECISIVE" IN THIS CONTEXT? THANIN HAS CERTAINLY NOT REJECTED DETENTE WITH THAILAND'S NEIGHBORS. EFFORTS TO NORMALIZE RELATIONS WITH CAMBODIA AND VIET-NAM CONTINUE BUT HAVE NOT PROSPERED, AS THESE TWO STATES EVIDENTLY DO NOT WISH TO NORMALIZE RELATIONS WITH THAILAND.

THANIN CANNOT FAIRLY BE SAID TO BE TOTALLY RESPONSIBLE FOR THIS SITUATION. HIS DEMOCRATICALLY-ELECTED PREDECESSORS, KHUKRIT PRAMOT AND SENI PRAMOT, MADE LITTLE PROGRESS IN THEIR EFFORTS TO NORMALIZE RELATIONS WITH THE COMMUNIST STATES OF INDO-CHINA. THE THANIN GOVERNMENT HAS SOUGHT TO IMPROVE RELATIONS WITH LAOS, WORKING STEADILY TO RESUME AIR COMMUNICATIONS BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES AND APPOINTING A THAI AMBASSADOR TO LAOS ON JUNE 6, 1977. AND WHY REFER TO VIET-NAM, LAOS, AND CAMBODIA AS "SOCIALIST NEIGHBORS?" THEY ARE COMMUNIST STATES AND ARE PROUD OF THE FACT. WHY NOT CALL LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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THINGS BY THEIR RIGHT NAME?

17. PARA ONE, PAGE 4, REFLECTS A SERIOUS MISUNDERSTANDING OF WHAT HAPPENED IN BANGKOK ON OCTOBER 6. POLICE FORCES, RESPONDING TO THE ORDER OF THE LEGALLY-ELECTED PRIME MINISTER, SENI PRAMOT, ENTERED THE CAMPUS OF THAMMASAT UNIVERSITY TO ARREST THOSE RESPONSIBLE FOR WHAT THE PRIME MINISTER TERMED ACTIONS "INSULTING TO THE CROWN PRINCE" (MOCK HANGING OF THE CROWN PRINCE). NO MILITARY FORCES PARTICIPATED IN THIS ACTION, WHICH ENDED AT ABOUT 10:30 AM, OCTOBER 6. THE VIOLENCE WHICH OCCURRED, IN WHICH RIGHTWING GROUPS ACTED WITH PARTICULAR BRUTALITY, HAD NOTHING TO DO WITH THE COUP ITSELF. HOWEVER, AS A CONSEQUENCE OF THE EVENTS AT THAMMASAT OCTOBER 6, WHICH WERE DESCRIBED IN DETAIL IN THE THAI PRESS AND CARRIED LIVE ON THAI TV, AND WHICH HAD A TRAUMATIC EFFECT ON THAI OPINION, THE THAI MILITARY CONCLUDED THAT THE SENI GOVERNMENT WOULD BE UNABLE TO REGAIN CONTROL OF THE RESULTING SITUATION. THE MILITARY TOOK OVER CONTROL OF THE GOVERNMENT, WITH THE FIRST BROADCAST TAKING PLACE AT 7:00 PM, OCTOBER 6.

18. PAGE 8, PARA TWO STATES THAT THE "OVERALL STRENGTHS OF THE 1975 PARLIAMENT WERE CONSIDERABLE...."--A STATEMENT HARD TO ACCEPT, CONSIDERING THAT THE 269 MEMBERS OF THE 1975 HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES WERE DIVIDED INTO 23 PARTIES AND GROUPS. IT WAS A BADLY-FRAGMENTED PARLIAMENT WHICH WOULD HAVE MADE THE TASK OF ANY GOVERNMENT DIFFICULT. PARA THREE, PAGE EIGHT, STATES THAT "POLARIZATION HAD REPLACED CONSENSUS AS THE BASIC TENET OF THAI POLITICS." THIS IS TRUE, BUT IS AN ALMOST INEVITABLE RESULT OF THE PARLIAMENTARY SYSTEM, WITH ITS CAREFUL DISTINCTION BETWEEN "GOVERNMENT" AND OPPOSITION". UNDER THE CIRCUMSTANCES, HOW SUCH A PARLIAMENT COULD BE SAID TO HAVE CONSIDERABLE STRENGTHS IS HARD TO UNDERSTAND. A MORE PRECEPTIVE COMMENT MIGHT BE THAT THE PARLIAMENTARY SYSTEM IS ILL-SUITED TO THE THAI POLITICAL PSYCHE, A VIEW WITH WHICH MANY THAI--AND BY NO MEANS ALL OF THE MILITARY-- WOULD AGREE.

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19. PARA 2, PAGE 11, CONTAINS ONE OF THE WORST MISREPRESENTATIONS IN THIS PAPER. IT STATES THAT "....DURING A LARGE ANTI-UNIVERSITY STUDENT DEMONSTRATION HELD IN BANGKOK AS PART OF THE ELECTION CAMPAIGN ON MARCH 20, 1976, A NUMBER OF RED GAUR CADRES WERE SEEN USING POLICE WALKIE-TALKIE RADIOS TO COMMUNICATE WITH EACH OTHER...." IN FACT, THIS DEMONSTRATION WAS ORGANIZED BY THE LEFT-IST NATIONAL STUDENT CENTER OF THAILAND TO REINFORCE THE NSCT DEMAND THAT U.S. TROOPS LEAVE THAILAND. THE DEMONSTRATION ROUTE LED FROM THE NSCT OFFICE ON RAJDAMNOEN BOULEVARD TO THE U.S. EMBASSY, WHERE DEMONSTRATION LEADERS PRESENTED A PETITION DEMANDING WITHDRAWAL OF U.S. TROOPS TO AN EMBASSY OFFICER. WHILE THE NSCT-LED CROWD OF SOME 10,000 WAS ENROUTE TO THE EMBASSY, PERSONS UNKNOWN DROPPED TWO HAND GRENADES AMONG THE MARCHERS, KILLING TWO PEOPLE. THE DEMONSTRATION HAD NO DIRECT CONNECTION WITH THE ELECTION CAMPAIGN. THE RED GAURS MAY HAVE HAD WALKIE-TALKIES. THE THAI POLICE, BOTH UNIFORMED AND IN PLAIN CLOTHES, ALSO HAD WALKIE-TALKIES AND ACCOMPANIED AND CLOSELY MONITORED THE MARCH TO ENSURE ORDER. THE NSCT LEADERS ALSO HAD WALKIE-TALKIES. THESE RADIO SETS ARE NOT THE RARITY THEY ONCE WERE. ANYONE CAN BUY THEM, AND AT A MODEST PRICE, FROM RADIO SHOPS IN BANGKOK.

20. PARA 2 OF PAGE 11 ALSO STATES THAT THAMMASAT UNIVERSITY CAMPUS WAS CLEARED OF DEMONSTRATIONS OF OCTOBER 6 BY UNITS OF THE BORDER PATROL POLICE AND "THE ARMY'S AIRBORNE BRIGADE." BPP UNITS
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WERE CERTAINLY PRESENT, AS THAI NATIONAL POLICE ENTERED THE CAMPUS ON ORDERS OF PRIME MINISTER SENI. HOWEVER, NO ARMY TROOPS WERE PRESENT. THERE IS NO "ARMY AIRBORNE BRIGADE" IN THE ROYAL THAI ARMY.

21. PARA ONE, PAGE 17, STATES, IN ITS FINAL SENTENCE, THAT "KHUKRIT'S

DEPARTURE, HOWEVER, MADE RETENTION OF THE ELECTED PARLIAMENTARY SYSTEM IN THE FACE OF MILITARY PRESSURE EVEN MORE DIFFICULT, FOR SENI WAS MUCH LESS ABLE THAN HIS YOUNGER BROTHER TO COPE WITH THE CHAOTIC POLITICAL SITUATION." THIS SERIOUSLY MISSTATES THE SITUATION. KHUKRIT'S RESIGNATION WAS A CONFESSION OF HIS INABILITY TO CONTROL THE BADLY-FRAGMENTED HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES ELECTED IN JANUARY, 1975, WITH THE 23 POLITICAL PARTIES REPRESENTED THEREIN. KHUKRIT OBTAINED THE KING'S DECREE ORDERING THAT NEW ELECTIONS BE HELD IN APRIL, 1976. IN THE ENSUING HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVE 19 POLITICAL PARTIES WERE REPRESENTED. HOWEVER, A FEW LARGE PARTIES OVERWHELMINGLY CONTROLLED THE 1976 HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, AND SENI PRAMOT'S FOUR-PARTY COALITION EVENTUATING FROM THESE ELECTIONS CONTROLLED ON PAPER, 206 OUT OF 279 SEATS. IT WAS NOT MILITARY PRESSURE WHICH DESTROYED THE SENI COALITION BUT RATHER FACTIONAL ACTIVITY WITHIN HIS OWN GROUPING, THE DEMOCRAT PARTY, AND ESPECIALLY FROM THE LEFT, OR "PROGRESSIVE FACTION" OF THAT PARTY. KHUKRIT IS AN ATTRACTIVE, INTELLIGENT, AMUSING FIGURE WHO SPEAKS EXCELLENT ENGLISH AND MAKES A VERY POSITIVE IMPRESSION ON MOST FOREIGN OBSERVERS. HOWEVER, DURING HIS TENURE AS PRIME MINISTER MANY THAIS WERE HIGHLY CRITICAL OF HIS INABILITY TO CONTROL HIS OWN GOVERNMENT. IT IS MAINLY IN RETROSPECT THAT SOME FOREIGN OBSERVERS REGARD KHUKRIT AS AN EFFECTIVE PRIME MINISTER, RATHER THAN ON THE BASIS OF HIS PERFORMANCE. CONTEMPORARY OBSERVERS DID NOT GENERALLY HOLD THIS VIEW.

22. PARA 3, PAGE 20, ADDRESSES THE ISSUE OF THE DESIRE TO RETURN TO THAILAND OF FORMER PRIME MINISTER THANOM AND OF FORMER DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER PRAPHAT. THE PARAGRAPH STATES THAT, "...APPARENTLY, THERE WAS NO REASON THEY (I.E., THANOM AND PRAPHAT) SHOULD NOT RETURN." IN FACT, THIS WAS THE ANNOUNCED POLICY OF THE SENI GOVERNMENT, NOT A RESULT OF MILITARY OR RIGHT-WING PRESSURE. PRIME LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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MINISTER SENI STATED REPEATEDLY AT THE TIME THAT, IN ACCORDANCE WITH SECTION 47 OF THE CONSTITUTION OF B.E. 2517 (1974), THANOM AND PRAPHAT HAD BASIC RIGHTS AS CITIZENS. SECTION 47 PROVIDED THAT, "EVERY PERSON ENJOYS THE LIBERTY TO TRAVEL AND THE LIBERTY TO CHOOSE RESIDENCE WITHIN THE KINGDOM....NO PERSON OF THAI NATIONALITY SHALL BE DEPORTED FROM THE KINGDOM." IT WAS IRONIC AND TRAGIC THAT WHAT PASSES FOR THE LEFT IN THAILAND SHOULD HAVE SOUGHT TO DEPRIVE THANOM AND PRAPHAT OF THEIR UNDOUBTED, CONSTITUTIONAL RIGHT TO LIVE IN THAILAND. DENYING TWO UNPOPULAR FIGURES OF THEIR CONSTITUTIONAL RIGHTS, AS THE "LEFT" SEEMED TO BE DOING, WAS HARDLY WORTH RISKING THE VIABILITY OF THE DEMOCRATIC EXPERIMENT IN THAILAND.

23. PARA 1, PAGE 25, REFERS TO THE MOCK HANGING EPISODE OF OCTOBER

, 1976, AT THAMMASAT UNIVERSITY, WHICH SET IN FINAL MOTION THE SEQUENCE OF EVENTS THAT LED TO THE COUP. IT STATES THAT, "A RIGHT-

WING NEWSPAPER PUBLISHED A PHOTOGRAPH PURPORTING TO SHOW THESE STUDENTS HANGING THE CROWN PRINCE IN EFFIGY (LATER EVIDENCE INDICATED CLEARLY THAT THIS PHOTO HAD BEEN RETOUCHEDED)." IN FACT, PHOTOS OF THE MOCK HANGING WERE PUBLISHED IN MANY BANGKOK NEWSPAPERS, INCLUDING THE ENGLISH-LANGUAGE BANGKOK POST AND THE NATION. THE REACTION IN BANGKOK TO THE PUBLICATION OF THE PHOTOS OF THE MOCK HANGING WAS SHARP. PEOPLE WHO NORMALLY SHOWED LITTLE INTEREST IN POLITICS WERE AGHAST AT WHAT THEY SAW AS AN IMPLIED THREAT TO THE ROYAL FAMILY. IT IS SIMPLY NOT TRUE THAT PUBLICATION OF AN ALLEGEDLY RETOUCHEDED PHOTO IN "A RIGHT-WING NEWSPAPER" COULD HAVE HAD THIS IMPACT, AS THERE WAS NOT MUCH DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE PHOTOS PUBLISHED IN NUMEROUS NEWSPAPERS. AS NOTED ABOVE, A GOVERNMENT STATEMENT OF OCTOBER 5, DENOUNCED ACTIONS INSULTING TO THE CROWN PRINCE WHICH HAD BEEN COMMITTED AND ORDERED THE POLICE TO INVESTIGATE THESE EVENTS. TO FIND A "RIGHT-WING" PLOT IN ALL OF THIS IS TO ASSUME THAT SENI PRAMOT WAS MANIPULATED, THAT MUCH OF THE BANGKOK PRESS WAS MANIPULATED, AND THAT PERHAPS THE STUDENT ACTIVISTS WHO PUT ON THE MOCK HANGING WERE MANIPULATED. THERE IS LITTLE EVIDENCE OF ANY OF THIS, AND SOME OF IT IS PALPABLY ABSURD.

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24. PARA ONE, PAGE 28, BEGINS WITH THE SENTENCE, "THE NEW THAI LEADERSHIP SEEMS EMBARKED ON A COURSE MOST LIKE THAT COSEN BY THE PHILIPPINES AND INDONESIA." ANALOGIES ARE FREQUENTLY AND DANGEROUSLY OVER-SIMPLIFIED, BUT THIS ONE

IS PARTICULARLY SO. IN THE FIRST PLACE, THE MAJOR FIGURES IN THE PHILIPPINES AND INDONESIA ARE PRESIDENT MARCOS AND PRESIDENT SUHARTO, RESPECTIVELY, BOTH OF WHOM ARE CLEARLY THE MOST POWERFUL LEADERS IN THE COUNTRY AND ARE SO RECOGNIZED, EVEN BY THEIR OPPONENTS. IN THAILAND THERE IS NO SUCH UNQUESTIONED LEADER. PRIME MINISTER THANIN WAS APPOINTED BY THE KING ON NOMINATION BY THE THAI MILITARY AND HAS NO INDEPENDENT POWER BASE. THE KING IS A CONSTITUTIONAL MONARCH, PLAYING A LIMITED POLITICAL ROLE. THE THAI MILITARY DO NOT HAVE AN UNQUESTIONED, MAJOR LEADER SUCH AS THEY HAD WITH PHIBUN SONGGRAM, SARIT THANARAT, OR THANOM KITTAKACHON IN THE PAST. THE COMPARISON WITH THE PHILIPPINES AND INDONESIA IS MEANINGLESS.

25. PARA TWO, PAGE 30, STATES THAT, "THE THAI INTELLECTUALS NOW IN THE INSURGENCY WERE FOR THE MOST PART PEOPLE WHO FROM 1973-76 BELIEVED IN THE GENUINE PROSPECTS FOR TRUE SOCIAL REFORM THROUGH PARTICIPATORY MECHANISMS." NOWHERE IN THE PAPER IS A LIST OF THESE "INTELLECTUALS" GIVEN, AND IT IS THEREFORE IMPOSSIBLE TO EVALUATE THE ABOVE SENTENCE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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AS A WHOLE. SOME OF THE INTELLECTUALS NOW REPORTED IN THE INSURGENCY, SUCH AS KHAISENG SUKSAI AND THIRAYUT BUNMI, WERE FROM THE FAR LEFT OF THE SOCIALIST PARTY OF THAILAND AND FROM THE RADICAL FRINGE OF THE NATIONAL STUDENT CENTER OF THAILAND. FROM THE TENOR OF THEIR PRONOUNCEMENTS OVER THE PERIOD FROM 1973 TO 1976, THERE IS LITTLE EVIDENCE THAT THEY WERE EVER COMMITTED TO "SOCIAL REFORM THROUGH PARTICIPATORY MECHANISMS."

26. PP 32-40 IS A WORST-CASE ANALYSIS OF THE PROSPECTS IN THAILAND, BASED ON A MECHANICAL AND LITERAL TRANSFER OF THE VIET-NAM PATTERN. THIS IS THE AUTHORS' ASSUMPTION OF WHAT THE FUTURE HOLDS FOR THAILAND, BUT THE BASIS FOR THEIR VIEW IS NOWHERE ADEQUATELY PRESENTED OR SUPPORTED.

27. PART THREE, ENTITLED "THE FUTURE OF U.S.-THAI RELATIONS", (PP 40-53) IS THE MOST DISAPPOINTING PART OF THIS POORLY-PRESENTED AND ARGUED ARTICLE. IT SETS UP FOUR SUPPOSED OPTIONS, THE FIRST TWO OF WHICH (TOTAL DISENGAGEMENT AND TOTAL COMMITMENT) ARE PLAINLY STRAW MEN FUNDAMENTALLY UNACCEPTABLE BOTH TO THAILAND AND TO THE U.S.

28. OPTION THREE (A "WAIT-AND-SEE POSTURE, RESPONDING TO DEVELOPMENTS IN THAILAND AS THEY OCCUR") IS NOT SERIOUSLY PRESENTED OR ARGUED, ALTHOUGH IT MAY BE THE MOST REALISTIC COURSE IN VIEW OF CURRENT TRENDS OF OPINION IN THE U.S. CONGRESS AND AMONG THE AMERICAN PEOPLE.

29. OPTION FOUR ("DEVISING A COHERENT STRATEGY FOR THAI DEVELOPMENT, MAKING AMERICAN AID CONTINGENT ON THAI DECISIONS TO PURSUE SUCH MUTUALLY-ACCEPTABLE OBJECTIVES") IS EVIDENTLY THE PREFERENCE OF THE AUTHORS. IT INVOLVES A POLICY OF CONSIDERABLE RISK FOR THE THAI GOVERNMENT-- IN EFFECT, RETURNING TO THE DEMOCRATIC EXPERIMENT-- AND UNCERTAIN RETURNS.

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30. OPTION FOUR IMPLIES A CONSPICUOUSLY CLOSE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THAILAND AND THE U.S. WHICH MAY WELL CAUSE SERIOUS PROBLEMS BETWEEN THAILAND AND ITS COMMUNIST NEIGHBORS. IN THE POST-INDOCHINA WAR ATMOSPHERE THAILAND IS CALLED ON TO PERFORM A KIND OF BALANCING ACT BETWEEN ITS NEIGHBORS AND THE UNITED STATES WHICH MIGHT, BECAUSE OF ITS DELICACY, BE COMPARED TO A HIGH-WIRE PERFORMANCE. IN THIS CONTEXT THAILAND MUST TAKE SOME DISTANCE FROM THE UNITED STATES, IN VIEW OF IT SNEED TO ACHIEVE DETENTE WITH ITS COMMUNIST NEIGHBORS. THE URGENCY OF THIS PROBLEM IS MADE CLEAR BY THE CONTINUING THEMES OF MEDIA OUTPUT FROM VIET-NAM, LAOS, AND CAMBODIA. THE COMMUNIST STATES HAVE CONTINUED TO REPRESENT THAILAND AS A PUPPET OF THE UNITED STATES, DESPITE THE WITHDRAWAL OF U.S. TROOPS IN 1976 AND THE STEADILY DECLINING TREND OF U.S. MILITARY AND ECONOMIC AID. AN INCREASE IN U.S. MILITARY AND/OR ECONOMIC AID WOULD CERTAINLY BE SHARPLY ATTACKED BY THE COMMUNIST STATES OF INDO-CHINA AND MIGHT TRIGGER THE KIND OF MASSIVE SUPPORT FOR THE COMMUNIST-LED THAI INSURGENCY WHICH SO FAR HAS NOT YET BEEN PROVIDED. IS THE POLICY LINE IMPLIED IN OPTION FOUR REALLY APPROPRIATE TO EITHER THAILAND OR THE UNITED STATES AT THIS TIME?

31. HOW MUCH AID WOULD THE U.S. BE PREPARED TO PROVIDE TO THAILAND? U. S. MILITARY AID HAS DECLINED STEADILY OVER THE YEARS, AND FY1978 IS THE LAST YEAR DURING WHICH GRANT MILITARY AID WILL BE FURNISHED, ALTHOUGH FOREIGN MILITARY SALES CREDITS WILL PROBABLY BE CONTINUED FOR SOME TIME, AT A MODEST LEVEL. U.S. ECONOMIC AID IS AT A RELATIVELY LOW LEVEL AND IS CURRENTLY SCHEDULED TO BE PHASED OUT COMPLETELY BY 1981, AS THAILAND HAS SUBSTANTIAL RESERVES AND IS ABLE TO OBTAIN SUBSTANTIAL AMOUNTS OF DEVELOPMENT CAPITAL FROM INTERNATIONAL FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS (E.G., IBRD AND ADB) AND FROM PRIVATE BANKS IN THE U.S., EUROPE, AND JAPAN. WHY REVERSE THESE CAREFULLY-CONSIDERED POLICIES, WHEN THE ARGUMENTS IN THEIR FAVOR ARE CONVINCING AND WELL-

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SUPPORTED?

32. THERE IS A CURIOUS, "DATED" LOOK ABOUT OPTION FOUR. IT MIGHT WELL HAVE BEEN WRITTEN FOR THE THAI SITUATION OF 1965. IT IS ABSURDLY OUT OF DATE IN TERMS OF THE THAI SITUATION OF 1975.

33. CONCLUSION - PLAINLY, THE AUTHORS OF THIS ARTICLE NEED TO GO BACK TO THE DRAWING BOARD AND RECONSIDER THEIR VIEWS IN A FUNDAMENTAL WAY. SEVERAL OF THEM HAVE SPENT LITTLE TIME IN THAILAND IN THE LAST FEW YEARS, AND THE STALENESS OF THEIR VIEWS AND THE POOR STATE OF THEIR RESEARCH SHOWS UP. MORE FUNDAMENTALLY, THOUGH, IT IS ASTONISHING THAT AMERICAN ACADEMICS, AFTER THE AGONIZING DEBATE IN THE U.S. OVER OUR INVOLVEMENT IN VIET-NAM, COULD SOMEHOW FAIL TO INCLUDE AN ADEQUATE ANALYSIS OF WHAT AMERICAN PUBLIC OPINION AND THE U.S. CONGRESS ARE PREPARED TO SUPPORT IN THE WAY OF POLICIES AND PROGRAMS IN THAILAND. NO U.S. POLICY OR PROGRAM TOWARDS THAILAND THAT CANNOT CALL ON SUBSTANTIAL AND CONTINUING SUPPORT OF THE U.S. IS WORTH UNDERTAKING. SURELY, THIS IS THE LESSON OF VIETNAM FOR THAILAND AND FOR ANY OTHER AREA OF THE WORLD WHERE A MAJOR AMERICAN INVOLVEMENT IS SERIOUSLY PROPOSED. WHITEHOUSE

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Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: HUMAN RIGHTS, FOREIGN RELATIONS, GOVERNMENT OVERTHROW, US CONGRESSIONAL HEARINGS, FOREIGN ASSISTANCE
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Copy: SINGLE
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Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
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Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
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Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
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Line Count: 628
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Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
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Office: ACTION EA
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 12
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
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Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 12-Jan-2005 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2135273
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: FRASER SUB-COMMITTEE HEARINGS ON HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION IN THAILAND SUMMARY: IN CONNECTION WITH FORTHCOMING FRASER SUB
TAGS: PFOR, SHUM, EAID, PINT, TH, US, (FRASER, DONALD M)
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvkey: odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/9312077c-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009